

JULY 4TH PLANNER – DESIGNATED DRIVER  
SAMPLE OP-ED  
601 words



**Plan Before You Party This Fourth of July**  
*Don't Forget to Designate a Sober Driver*

The long Fourth of July weekend represents one of the most dangerous and deadliest times of year on the nation's highways. One big reason is a significant jump in impaired driving-related traffic crashes and fatalities.

The Fourth of July holiday and weekend has become one of the deadliest times of the year due to impaired- driving-related crashes and fatalities. In fact, 47 percent of the 514 traffic fatalities across the country on and around the Fourth of July in 2003 involved an impaired driver with a blood alcohol concentration level of 0.08 grams per deciliter or higher, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

According to a study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety of all motor vehicle fatalities in the United States between 1986 and 2002, July 3<sup>rd</sup> and July 4<sup>th</sup> are the two deadliest days of the year on our highways – with approximately 41 percent of the fatalities on those two days involving an impaired driver with a blood alcohol concentration level of 0.08 grams per deciliter or higher.

As a point of comparison, four people died in America from injuries involving the use of fireworks around July 4<sup>th</sup> in 2003 according to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, while alcohol-related traffic crashes on the same day killed 282 people. Fireworks and impaired driving are both dangerous, but impaired driving is considerably more deadly.

Some of the tragedy that comes from impaired driving crashes could be prevented if everyone would take a few simple precautions before going out to party this summer. When you plan to consume alcohol, be sure to *Plan Before You Party – and Designate a Sober Driver* in advance. And remember, *Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk*.

Always follow these tips for a safer summer outing:

- Designate your sober driver before going out.
- If you're drinking alcohol, don't even think about driving when impaired – and never let your friends drive if you think they are impaired.

- Don't drink alcohol "on an empty stomach," and drink lots of water during your activities to keep hydrated.
- When impaired, ask a sober friend for a ride home, use mass transit, call a cab or your local sober rides program, **(if your community has a local sober rides program, please insert the information and phone number here)**.
- Ask a friend or family member to come get you, or just stay where you are and sleep it off until you are sober.

And, of course, always remember to wear your safety belt. It is still your single best defense against death or injury in a crash. Impaired driving is one of America's deadliest problems. Nationally, more than 14,000 people died in impaired-driving-related highway crashes during 2003 involving a driver with a BAC level of 0.08 or higher. Every 30 minutes, nearly 50 times a day, someone in America dies in an alcohol-related crash. Hundreds of thousands more are injured each year. According to NHTSA, about three in every ten Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives.

Driving impaired or riding with someone who is impaired is simply not worth the risk because the consequences are serious and real. Not only do you risk killing yourself or someone else, but the trauma and financial costs of a crash or an arrest for driving while impaired can be really significant.

Too many people still don't understand that alcohol, drugs and driving don't mix. Impaired driving is no accident – nor is it a victimless crime.

Please remember: *Plan Before You Party This Fourth of July. Don't Forget to Designate Your Sober Driver.*

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